UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/Sub.2/1999/NGO/5
24 June 1999

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Fifty-first session
Items 4 (b), 5 (b) and 11 of the
provisional agenda

THE REALIZATION OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS: THE REALIZATION OF THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN: THE ROLE AND EQUAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

SITUATION REGARDING THE PROMOTION, FULL REALIZATION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Written statement submitted by the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[7 June 1999]

GE.99-13846 (E)

The impact of HIV/AIDS on women, children and development

1. In just two decades, AIDS has become the leading cause of death in Africa and now kills more people worldwide than any other infectious disease. According to UNAIDS, by the end of 1998 the number of people with HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) had reached about 34 million, 10 per cent more than just one year earlier. More than 95 per cent of all HIV-infected people now live in the developing world, which has likewise experienced 95 per cent of all deaths to date from AIDS. These deaths are largely among young adults who would normally be in their peak productive and reproductive years.

2. This impact is seen in deteriorating child survival, reduced life expectancy, overburdened health care systems, increased numbers of orphans and government and private sector losses. Together, the epidemic's visible and less-visible consequences constitute an urgent and massive threat to development.

3. In 1997, women accounted for 41 per cent of the number of infected adults worldwide. In 1998, women represented 43 per cent of all people over 15 years living with HIV infection. There are no indications that this trend will reverse. For example, in African countries with high rates of new HIV infections among young people, young women are twice as likely as young men to become infected.

4. By 2005-2010 for example, 61 out of every 1,000 infants born in South Africa are expected to die before the age of one year. In the absence of AIDS, infant mortality would have been as low as 38 per 1,000. In Botswana, where more than 25 per cent of adults are infected, children born early in the next decade can expect to only live to just over 40 years (instead of 70 years). Between 1996 and 1997, Botswana dropped 26 places down the Human Development Index.

5. Young people are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS. Around half of new HIV infections each year are in people aged 15-24. About 1.7 million young people in Africa get infected with HIV every year. In Asia and the Pacific, the figure is close to 700,000.

6. People living with HIV/AIDS (or suspected of infection) risk discrimination, violence, even death. Those most vulnerable to infection are also groups which face discrimination and stigmatization in other contexts (e.g. women, drug users, young people, men who have sex with men). Of further concern is attacks on the rights of HIV/AIDS activists, educators and human rights defenders, who may be targeted for their work with people with HIV/AIDS or disadvantaged communities.

7. ICASO recalls that in September 1996, an international consultation of experts convened by UNAIDS and the (then) Centre for Human Rights drafted the International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights. The Guidelines, which were annexed to resolution 1997/33 of the Commission on Human Rights and welcomed by the Sub-Commission in resolution 1997/40, provide guidance for Member States, United Nations system and regional intergovernmental bodies, and non-governmental organizations on a

comprehensive framework for policy and law reform to limit the spread of HIV and reduce the impact of HIV and AIDS. In resolution 1999/49, the Commission requested a further report on steps taken to promote and implement the Guidelines.

ICASO action to promote the International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights, and related activities

8. To assist NGOs disseminate and promote the International Guidelines, ICASO (with UNAIDS funding) has prepared two documents: an NGO Summary and an Advocate's Guide (available in English, French and Spanish). In June 1999 ICASO also published a collection of case studies of national activities on HIV/AIDS and human rights.

9. ICASO also assists NGOs and community-based organizations to draw the attention of the human rights treaty bodies, special rapporteurs and representatives to HIV/AIDS-related abuses of human rights. In June 1999, ICASO made a submission to the Human Rights Committee with information provided by the Bucharest Acceptance Group (ACCEPT) and supported by the Romanian Association Anti-AIDS (ARAS).

10. To promote better access to effective medications for HIV infection and AIDS in developing countries, ICASO supported the adoption of the Revised Drug Strategy by the World Health Assembly in May 1999.

Recommendations

11. ICASO calls on the members of the Sub-Commission, special rapporteurs, working groups, Member States and NGOS participating at this session to:

1. Unite in a spirit of global solidarity to support developing countries and resource-poor communities, where the burden of the HIV/AIDS epidemic is greatest.

2. Review the International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights in the context of their work on the realization of the right to development, the role and equal participation of women in development, and the promotion, full realization and protection of the rights of children and youth, and other areas.

3. Include references, where appropriate, to the impact of HIV/AIDS on these areas and recommendations for action to address HIV/related abuses.

4. Disseminate, promote and implement the International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights, as appropriate, and document and publicize such activities.